2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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CHAPTER II

THE SHILLUK

131 THE Shilluk country forms a narrow fringe on the west bank of the Nile, from Kaka in the north to within 30 miles of Lake No in the south. From Kodok to Taufikia the Shilluk also occupy the east bank, and their villages extend some 35 miles up the Sobat River, 132 principally on the north bank. Theirs is the flat grass country, ●433 dry in the dry season, swampy in the wet, extending on both sides of the Nile; hence cattle are their wealth and principal care, and 231 although a considerable quantity of millet is grown not enough is 243 harvested to provide fully for the relatively dense population, and scarcity is by no means unusual. A census taken in 1903 gave a population of nearly 40,000, possessing over 12,000 head of cattle 161 and nearly 64,000 sheep and goats. No doubt the number of cattle returned was unduly low, but, making all allowances, the Shilluk are poorer in cattle than are the Dinka. The 1903 figure is far below that suggested by Schweinfurth (1,200,000), and at the present time it is likely that the Shilluk number some 100,000.

171 We have stated in Chapter I that in our opinion the homeland of the Shilluk-speaking tribes lay to the east of Lake Victoria. We have 174 no historical record of a northerly movement, all we can say is that a series of migrations gave rise to a number of tribes speaking Shilluk dialects in what is now the Bahr el Ghazal Province, and that from one of these, the Luo, the Shilluk nation of history originated.

[114] The researches of the Rev. Father Hofmayr of the Austrian Mission[1] indicate that the Luo—the Shilluk-speaking "Jur"—of the Bahr el Ghazal Province represent the remains of what was once a greater Luo people, from whom are derived the present Shilluk nation, or, more accurately, a certain number of their leading families including that of the king. Here in the neighbourhood of the present Luo country, the land of Dimo of the legends, Nyakang—the leader, culture-hero, and first king of the Shilluk—lived with his half-brother's son, Dimo, until the enmity of the latter drove Nyakang and his followers to seek fresh homes to the east and so brought into existence

[1] Wilhelm Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk. Geschichte, Religion und Leben eines Niloten-Stammes*, Wien, 1925.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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Chapter XIV

FAMINE AND FLOOD

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the majority of the Shilluk live in a state of chronic hunger. The poverty of the land they till, their primitive methods of husbandry, the elements which seem to fight against them in their annual struggle to raise a crop all contribute to make this so. And if despite all these handicaps, if perhaps in an occasional year the fates relent a little and send neither deluge nor drought, but a supply of rain liberal enough to nurture a plentiful field, then the weaver birds will descend in their millions to lay waste the great heads of mature but as yet unripened grain. The damage that these tiny predators can do is incredible. In the early dawn they swoop like a black cloud on the unprotected fields, settle and after a short time, rise again. But they leave behind them ruin; the heads of grain are in rags and tatters and the ground is carpeted green with the unripened grain. In three or four days the former flourishing field is laid waste.

Once, at daybreak, I saw a migration of weaver birds. They were flying up the Nile from north to south. I did not see the beginning of this great army, neither did I see the end, but for half an hour it flew in an unbroken mass which seemed to stretch across the entire breadth of the river and to be about a foot deep. Its passing boded ill for the luckless cultivators in the south.

Despite these misfortunes the Shilluk usually manage to garner something from their impoverished fields. From October and for the next few months they generally have sufficient to eat and after that, if they have money to buy it, grain imported from more prosperous parts of the country is available in the merchants' stores. But occasionally the whole country is stricken. The failure of the rains is